nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org April 05

TALKS & VIDEOS

Lake Naivasha

The Comedy of Ecological Errors; a play in 8 Acts

By Dr David Harper

Monday 11 April 5:30 p.m.

at the Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

All Welcome

OPPORTUNITIES

A workshop - on "Ecosystem Health" and on "Taxonomy for Biodiversity Conservation" is now being planned for the end of July 2005, to be held at Lake Bogoria.

If you would like further details, please write to Dr David Harper at dmh@knighton.u-net.com. You need to at least have some experience of working in conservation, an interest in lakes or wetlands and be an undergraduate student or equivalent. The subject will be soda lake ecology.

On page 2 is a brief description of Dr Harper's work

APRIL AT A GLIMPSE

Sat 2	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Sat 9	Tree Walk
Mon 11	L. Naivasha talk
Sun 17	Sunday Birdwalk
Sat 23	Olorgesaillie outing
Mon 25	Tree Walk
Fri 29 - 1 May	Herps Coast trip

Editorial Team

Editor Catherine Ngarachu
Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno
Naturalist's Corner Dino Martins

IN HOUSE

Annual General Meeting

of the East Africa Natural History Society

Thursday 12 May 05 at 4:30 p.m.

at the Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

For nominations to the Executive Committee please collect forms at the office

Art Competition

Design the cover for the Resource Book *Learning for Sustainable Living in Kenya*

Nature Kenya is producing a locally relevant resource book for public primary schools in the country, to be used to teach Sustainable Development.

This will link very well with the Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014) recently launched by the United Nations (UNESCO/UNEP).

Using the theme 'Learning for sustainable living in Kenya', we welcome young artists to design the cover page for this book. Besides the credit you will receive for the artwork, we will offer a gift voucher of 5000/- Your artwork must be at least A4 size and in full colour, using your preferred medium.

Send your entries to the Education Manager at the Nature Kenya address. Entries should be received by end of April 2005

IN THE FIELD

Olorgesaillie in the rainy season

Sat. 23 April 05

Meet at the Nairobi Museum car park at 6:45 a.m. and bring water, hat, and picnic

Herpetofauna activities

Trip to the Coast

29 April - 1 May 2005

Visit Arabuko Sokoke Forest, Mamba Village & the Bamburi nature trails

For information on costs & booking arrangements please contact Beryl Akoth (3742131/4 ext 244) at the Herpetology department National Museums of Kenya.

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action

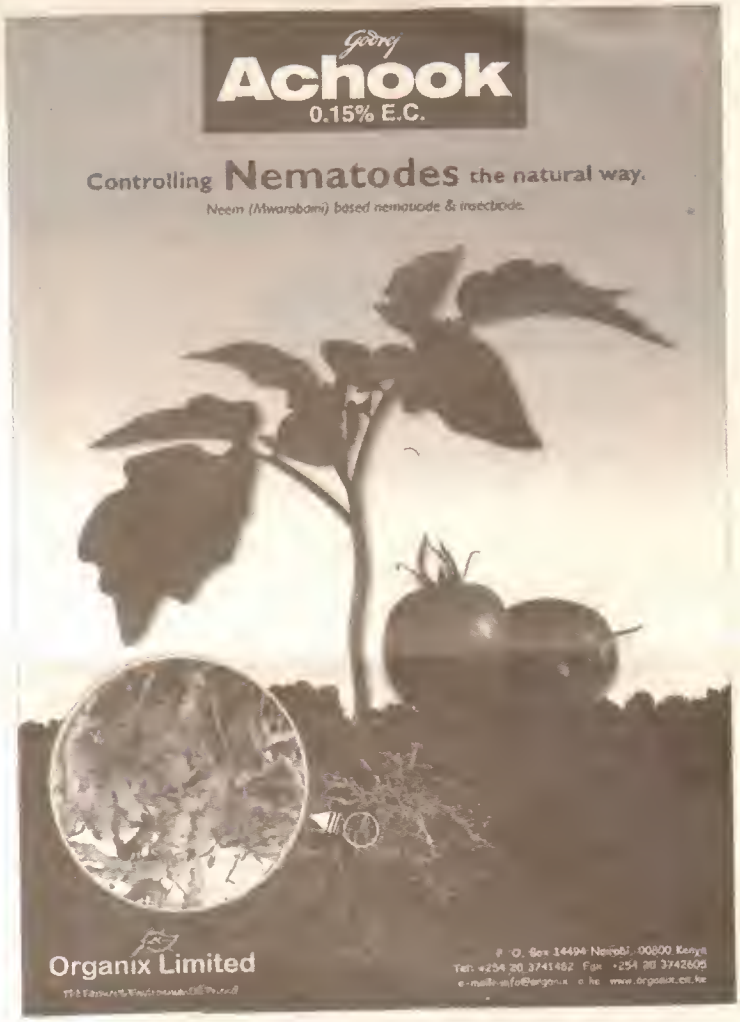
From Crayfish and Lake Naivasha to Flamingos and Lake Bogoria

'Lakes of the Rift Valley" research teams (from the University of Leicester and the University of Nairobi), have for the last seventeen years, been studying Lake Naivasha and, more recently, Lake Bogoria. The teams are led by Dr David Harper and sponsored by the Earthwatch Institute.

It was their scientific discoveries that showed the Louisiana crayfish to be the real destroyer of the native vegetation in Lake Naivasha; and their discoveries that showed the severe loss of papyrus is caused by a combination of lake level decline, heavy grazing and burning or clearing by people. They continue to research this lake - the "biggest ecological experiment in the world" as David has called it. The damage done by the alien species - particularly the newest, the common carp, which has taken over the fishery in only 3 years - far outweighs anything the horticultural industry has done directly. Now they are working closely with local organisations, particularly the Lake Naivasha Riparian Association, to set up a regular monitoring programme as well as working on local educational initiatives.

Four years ago they also started studying Lake Bogoria, in order to better understand that lake's ecology in relation to its importance to lesser flamingos. Last year they were able to observe the lake when it had a great decline of its Spirulina population and loss of all its oxygen (when this happens you can smell the lake 20 kilometres away in Marigat!). The loss of oxygen killed off the midges or 'lakeflies' that live in the bottom mud as larvae, and then hatch out as swarms of flies, supporting tens of thousands of swallows and swifts that 'hawk' over the lake. Everyone knows, of course, that Bogoria is a soda lake, that also supports the graceful lesser flamingos. They feed on the Spirulina, filtering it from the fantastically-concentrated soup that it forms in the top few centimetres of this lake and other soda lakes like Nakuru. In 2004, the flamingos were almost completely absent from Bogoria, seeking their food elsewhere. In some other years, there have been large die-offs of the flamingos either at Bogoria or Nakuru, but the causes of this do not seem to be un-natural and are soon replaced by the (irregular) breeding, down at Lake Natron.

Since 2003, David and his colleagues have had a grant from the prestigious "Darwin Initiative" of the UK Government. This has enabled them to study the flamingos and the lake more intensively, but it also has a large educational component. Part of that component is the running of one-week workshops teaching young Kenyans embarking on their careers about lake ecology and conservation. So far 60 hove attended the workshops - on "Ecosystem Health" and on "Taxonomy for Biodiversity Conservation" in 2003 and 2004.



Prefab building provides much needed extra space!

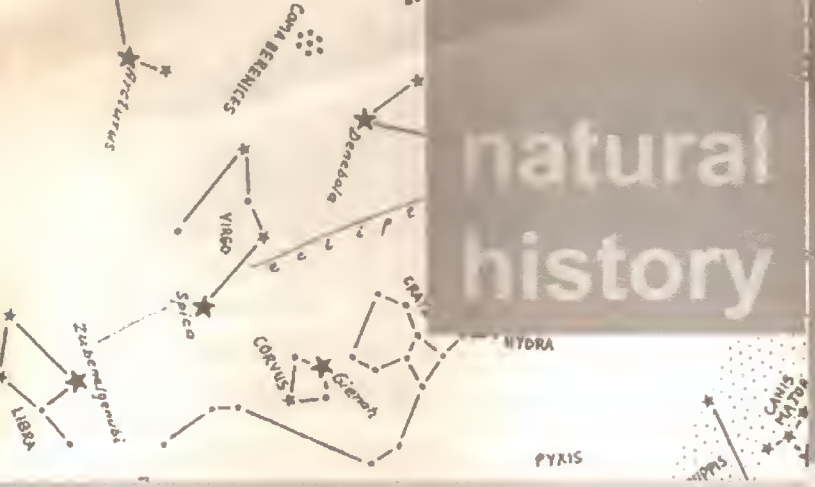
Opposite the Kikuyu homestead, on the Nairobi Museum campus is a secondhand prefab building, which will be the location for a new Nature Kenya membership shop and subscription office. The building is standing tall and beautiful, but many items are needed to make it functional. This includes shelving for shop displays and storage, surrounding area landscaping, networking for better communication, chairs & office desk, toilet and water facilities and lots of other items like extension cables, phone sets, file cabinet, plants etc

Can you help?

Can you help?

If you are able to help and support Nature Kenya in any way, please get in touch with the Membership Marketing Officer at office@naturekenya.org

Prefab building donated, with many thanks, by the World Food Programme, Somalia Office with the kind facilitation of the Economic Housing Group.



EVENING SKY

By Ian Mackay

April Moon, 2005

April 2nd *last quarter;* April 8th *new moon;* April 16th *first quarter;* April 24th *full moon.*

April Stars

The constellation of Hydra, the Sea Serpent, is a long trail of stars reaching far across the night sky. In April it is almost overhead, a winding line of stars parallel to the ecliptic. The ecliptic is the orbit of the earth around the sun; to us on earth, the moon and planets seem to move more or less along this line.

The bright yellow star Regulus is high above in the constellation of Leo. The bright blue-white star Spica is lower in the east, in the constellation Virgo. Below Spica, on the horizon, the constellation Libra is rising, with its bright star Zubenelgenubi. (The planet Jupiter, much brighter, is also low in the east this year.)

To the left of Spica, in the northeast, the brilliant orange-yellow star Arcturus is rising. Further north is the constellation of the Plough or Big Dipper.

In the south, look for the Southern Cross, and Vela, the sail (of a sailing ship). Vela is a large constellation to the right (west) of the Southern Cross.

In the west, close to the horizon, the star Aldebaran, the fiery red eye of Taurus the Bull, is setting. When Aldebaran has disappeared, start looking the other way, between the east and south-east, to see the red fiery eye of the rising Scorpion. According to ancient Greek legends, the Bull and the Scorpion are deadly enemies and were placed in the heavens so that they may never have to see each other.

April 2005 Planets

The small planet Mercury returns to the morning sky this month. The best viewing will be in the mornings before dawn, with Mercury at its highest this year from mid April to mid May. The reddish planet Mars is also in the morning sky, but Venus cannot be seen, it is too close to the sun.

Saturn is high in the sky in the evening, a bright point of light that does not sparkle like the stars. Brilliant Jupiter is prominent in the east at sunset. During the night Jupiter (and the stars) seem to move across the sky, until morning twilight.

Some of the moons that orbit the planet Jupiter can be seen with binoculars. They look like small lights in a straight line around the large planet. On April 4th and 13th, Jupiter's moon Callisto is at maximum possible elongation. This means that Callisto will appear to be far away from Jupiter, (above it on the 4th, below it on the 13th). We will be able to see Callisto without any magnification!

Look out at sunset on April 22nd to see another rare sight, as Jupiter is occulted by the full moon rising in the east.

Tell your friends about Nature Kenya!

Introducing a friend to Nature Kenya is good for them and good for biodiversity. Good for your friends because they will receive all the enjoyment and benefits that your membership gives you! and good for biodiversity, because new members support the conservation action of Nature Kenya. So remember to tell your friends, about Nature Kenya the next time you 'flock together' - and if someone is interested, please give them the form on page 4 in this newsletter or direct them to our stand at the Sarit Centre!

From Monday 4 to Sunday 24 April 05 Nature Kenya will have a stand at Sarit Centre. It will be located next to the Post Office boxes area on the lower ground floor of Sarit.

It also offers you easy access to renew your membership and purchase our publications.

From just 1000/- a year your friend will receive all the benefits of a Nature Kenya membership

ON THE AIR

Nature Kenya is on air every Thursday between 11 a.m. & 12 p.m. on Radio Waumini 88.5 FM giving insights on environmental issues.

Tune-in to this station to follow the discussions and give us your views!

Fish Eagle photo by Munir Virani

Bird Hotline

3749957

White-browed Robin-chat
Hippo Pool, Nairobi N.P / Feb
Shailesh Patel & Paul Morling

A flock of African Silverbills
Nairobi N.P/ Feb Shailesh Patel & Conard Hendry

CORRECTION!

In the article *Action needed to save L. Naivasha from devastating effects* by Don Turner in the March issue of Nature net, the last sentence in the second paragraph should read ' It was only a matter of time before the Fish Eagle population showed signs of decreasing due, at least in part,x to the presence of toxic wastes finding their way into the food chain.'

Up & about

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu **every** Friday of the month. For further details **call** 057 42952 or 0734 994938 or email lakevictoriasunsetbirders@yahoo.co.uk

Mt Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group (MKBCG)

The MKBCG is a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks to sites around Naro Moru every last Saturday of the month i.e. 30 April.For more information contact 0722 364904, 0733 937115 or 062 62071 Email: mt_kebio@yahoo.co.uk

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **9 & 25 April from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the Arboretum gate. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 17 April.** The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

Organised by the Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust, nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **2 & 16 April, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse. Call Anthony Charo to confirm on 575207 or 0733 712406.

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **2 April, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees now apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. **16 October.** Please call Marlene Reid on (041) 491 648 to confirm

Plan your weekend or other break to stay at the

Kinangop Guest House

Perched on the Kinangop Plateau with incredible views across the Rift Valley, the farm combines tussock-grass pasture, indigenous forest, and attractive gardens. The guesthouse is comfortable and fully furnished. Visitors can enjoy hikes and walks on the farm or go further afield with local guides.

For more information, brochure and non-member rates please contact Nature Kenya.

Guest House rates: Day visit 350/-

MEMBER nos	Overnight	Weekend
1 to 2 pax	4000/-	6500/-
3 pax	4,900/-	7,400/-
4 pax	5,800/-	8,300/-

20% off at the Driftwood Beachclub

On presentation of your membership card, you can get 20% discount (if paying by cash or cheque) at the Driftwood Beachclub. This is a charming beachfront property with great food and service.

Contact Driftwood Beachclub <driftwood@swiftmalindi.com> or tel 042 20155

NatureKenya

Yes! ☐ *Start* ☐ *Renew*

my Nature Kenya membership

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(OPTIONAL - but useful to us in planning)

Occupation

Age Bracket (tick) under 21( ) 21-35( ) 36-50( ) over 50( )

Country of Origin

Would you like us to share your contacts Yes/ No

For Official Use Only Sub No. Recpt. No.

Mode Due Date Recpt Date

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Kenya Birds **(tick to receive this free Bird magazine)**		
Journal of E.A. Natural History	1000	
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DONATE & ***Help us to do even more!***	5000/Other	
Total		

If you live reside outside of Kenya please refer to www.naturekenya.org